

The Harris Survey

Support of Viet Commitment Still 62%

by Louis Harris

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The mood of the American people about the Vietnam war best can be described as somber but not despairing, as frustrated but not defeatist. It is true that 62% still support the U.S. commitment in Vietnam. But less than a majority, 47%, currently gives President Johnson a favorable rating on his handling of the situation, and the number of people who think we should pull out has increased sharply.

Contributing materially to the prevailing dour public mood about Vietnam are two key elements:

- The confidence level in the government of South Viet-

nam has fallen, and for every American who expresses confidence in Gen. Ky there are more than two who harbor serious doubts and reservations. The net result is to raise in many people's minds a question of whether the South Vietnamese are capable of forming a viable, stable government.

• Only 8% of the public sees any early settlement of the Vietnam war. Almost 3 in every 4 Americans—73%—now believe the struggle will go on for several years. This sense of "travail without end" is straining both the patience and normal optimism of the American people.

A cross section of the public was asked again this month, as it has been asked in previous months:

"How would you rate the job President Johnson has done in handling the war in Vietnam—excellent, pretty good, only fair or poor?"

LBJ RATING ON HANDLING VIETNAM

	Good-Excellent	Only Fair-Poor
Late April, 1966	47%	53%
March, 1966	49	51
January, 1966	62	37
December, 1965	66	34
September, 1965	66	34
May, 1965	57	43
January, 1965	41	59

The pattern of shifts in support of the President are by no means uniform:

KEY GROUPS ON LBJ AND VIETNAM: POSITIVE RATING

	Late April 1966	March 1966
Nationwide	47%	49%
By region		
East	45	52
Midwest	46	52
South	49	43
West	49	48
By sex		
Men	50	46
Women	44	51
By past vote		
Voted Goldwater in '64	29	37
Voted LBJ in 1964	60	60

Nearly everyone wants to see the war come to an honorable end, but there is no agreement on how to accomplish this objective. Further evidence is to be found in the results of a trend question asked

in January, March and again recently:

"I want to hand you a card with four statements on it. Each statement has a different point of view about the war in Vietnam. Please read all four statements before telling me which one you agree with most."

POSITION ON VIETNAM WAR

	Late April	Mar.	Jan.
I disagree with present policy. We are not going far enough. We should go further, such as carrying the war more into North Vietnam.	13%	16%	12%
I agree with what we are doing, but we should increase our military effort to win a clear military victory.	36	33	33
I agree with what we are doing, but we should do more to bring about negotiations, such as a cease-fire.	32	34	39
I disagree with present policy. We shouldn't be there. We shouldn't be bombing North Vietnam and should pull our troops out now.	16	9	7
Not sure	9	9	9

SUMMARY

Support Administration policy	42	47	71
Oppose Administration policy	29	24	19
Not sure	9	9	9
Pro-escalation	43	47	45
Anti-escalation	48	43	48
Not sure	9	8	7

It is apparent from these results that President Johnson is being criticized by both the "get out now" and the "drastically escalate" groups. Recent weeks have seen an ebbing of extreme "hawk" statements and a doubling of the extreme "dove" point of view. Thus, over-all support of the war has slipped 10 points since January.

The fact remains that the commitment to the Vietnam war still prevails among 62%

of the American people, but the volunteered reasons people give reflect their frustration and pessimism.

REASONS BEHIND VIEWS ON VIETNAM

	Total Public
Fight and get it over with	36%
Do everything to negotiate	17
Get out	16
Wrong to kill our boys	16
Quickest way to end it is to win	8
Wrong to kill civilians	5
Hanoi won't make peace	5
Vietnam doesn't deserve help	5